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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **WHAT HAPPENED MAYOR PARKER?**

Houston, Texas, January 29, 2013 – Unity for A Solution, a collaboration between three independent animal welfare organizations, is asking “What Happened Mayor Parker?” after uncovering a 2007 press release where Mayor Annise Parker, then City Controller, voices her support for spay and neuter as the best method of controlling animal overpopulation.

In the press release, titled “No Homeless Dogs & Cats in Houston by 2013”, Mayor Parker stated: “Reducing the need for animal sheltering and control in Houston could save taxpayers much of the \$15 million in taxes and private donations spent each year to operate the five major local shelters. . . Preventing homeless dogs and cats by spaying or neutering is not only kinder than destroying them, it’s much less expensive in the long run.” prnewswire.com/news-releases/no-homeless-dogs--cats-in-houston-by-2013-59840527.html.

Unity for A Solution claims that contrary to the statement, under Parker’s administration the city of Houston has attempted to control overpopulation by focusing on adoptions and euthanasia, a strategy that has failed to reduce the numbers of homeless and unwanted animals throughout the city. Furthermore, the city maintains an unacceptably high euthanasia rate at BARC, the city animal shelter, where between January and September 2012, 10,371 dogs and cats were euthanized.¹ This number does not include animals euthanized at the Houston SPCA, Houston Humane Society, Citizens for Animal Protection and Harris County Animal Control. The only spay and neuter services the city offers are provided by one (1) SNAP mobile clinic that can fix a maximum of 25 animals daily.

“The situation is only getting worse,” said Corridor Rescue board member Anna Barbosa. “On any day you can walk the streets of the Corridor and see at least one or two pregnant stray dogs. You will find a litter of puppies huddling in a heap of trash or a drainage ditch. We’ve seen three generations of stray dogs trying to survive on the streets. This crisis is escalating.”

Barbosa’s opinion was shared by Barrio Dogs’ founder and president, Gloria Medina Zenteno. “Every day we see more homeless and suffering animals on the streets and in areas where we had not seen them before.” Zenteno continued, “As private citizens we are doing as much as we can to improve the situation, including providing free spay and neuter for pets belonging to East End residents. It is time for the city of Houston to step up and do its share. We don’t want more euthanasia and BARC sweeps in our community; we want a plan that focuses on free and low cost spay and neuter of pets and stray animals.”

Unity for a Solution is a collaboration between Corridor Rescue, Forgotten Dogs of the Fifth Ward and Barrio Dogs who have joined forces to address animal overpopulation and improve conditions for homeless and unwanted animals. Their first priority is working with Houston's elected officials and the city of Houston to bring more low cost or free spay and neuter services to areas in the city that are hardest hit by overpopulation. The group will also work to raise public awareness in the communities they serve about proper animal care and the importance of spaying and neutering pets. They are relying heavily on social media to spread the word about their efforts to their supporters in Houston and elsewhere. The decision to unite was inspired by the three groups' 2012 collaboration in "Music for Mutts" and from the realization that together, they have a better chance of helping more of the many homeless and unwanted animals suffering in Houston.

In addition to observations and anecdotal information, there is data to support the opinion that Houston has an animal overpopulation problem. According to BARC, there are 1.2 million homeless animals on Houston's streets.² Furthermore, the University of Texas School of Public Health's 2010 "Health of Houston" survey polled residents throughout the city about public health concerns. On the issue of homeless animals, over 50% of the residents consider stray dogs and cats a community problem in Houston's East End, East Houston-Settegast, Near Northside-Fifth Ward, Third Ward-McGregor-Gulfgate and Sunnyside.³

For more information, go to unityforasolution.org.

¹ houstontx.gov/barc/ab_asimolar_accords.php

² BARC statistic reported by Fox26 Houston, "A chorus of help for homeless animals in the Houston area," 9/21/12

³ sph.uth.edu/research/centers/ihp/health-of-houston-survey-2010